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LETTER

TO A

GENTLEMAN

AT

BRISTOL.

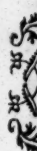
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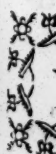
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LETTER, &c.

BRISTOL, January 6, 1758.

S I R,

Y^{OU} desire my Thoughts on a Paper lately addrest to the Inhabitants of St. *Stephen's* Parish, and an Answer thereto, intituled "A seasonable Antidote against Popery." I have at present little Leisure, and cannot speak so fully, as the Importance of the Subject requires. I can only just tell you, wherein I do, or do not agree with what is advanced in the one or the other.

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I AGREE

I AGREE with the main of what is asserted in that Paper, allowing for some *Expressions*, which I could wish had been alter'd: Because some of them are a little obscure; others liable to Misinterpretation: Indeed so liable, that they could scarce fail to be misunderstood by the unwary, and censured by the unfriendly Reader.

BUT I cannot agree, That "Obedience is a Condition of, or antecedent to Justification" (unless we mean Final Justification). This I apprehend to be a considerable Mistake: Although indeed it is not *explicitly asserted*, but only implied in some Parts of that Address.

I ENTIRELY agree with the Author of the "Seasonable Antidote," in the important Points that follow:

" THAT a Sinner is justified, or accounted righteous before God, only through the Righteousness (or Merits) of Jesus Christ:

" THAT

“ THAT the End of his living and
 “ dying for us was, That our Persons
 “ first, and then our Works might be
 “ accepted :

“ THAT Faith is the Hand which
 “ apprehends, the Instrument which
 “ applies the Merits of *Christ* for our
 “ Justification :

“ THAT justifying Faith is the Gift
 “ of the Holy Spirit :

“ THAT He evidences our being justi-
 “ fied, by bearing his Testimony with
 “ our Spirits, that we are the Children
 “ of God, and by enabling us to bring
 “ forth first the Inward, and then the
 “ Outward Fruits of the Spirit : And

LASTLY, “ THAT these Fruits do
 “ not justify us, do not procure our
 “ Justification, but prove us to be justi-
 “ fied : As the Fruits on a Tree do
 “ not make it alive, but prove it to be
 “ alive.” ^a

THESE

THESE undoubtedly are the genuine Principles of the Church of *England*. And they are confirm'd, as by our Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies, so by the whole Tenor of Scripture. Therefore 'till Heaven and Earth pass away, these Truths will not pass away.

BUT I do not agree with the Author of that Tract, in the Spirit of the whole Performance. It does not seem to breath either that Modesty, or Seriousness, or Charity which one would desire. One would not desire to hear any private Person, of no great Note in the Church or the World, speak as it were *ex Cathedrá*, with an Air of Infallibility, or at least, of vast Self-sufficiency, on a Point wherein Men of Eminence both for Piety, Learning and Office, have been so greatly divided. Though my *Judgment* is nothing alter'd, yet I often condemn myself for my past *Manner* of speaking on this Head. Again; I do not rejoice at observing any Thing light or ludicrous in an Answer to so serious a Paper: And much less in finding any Man branded as a *Papist*, because his Doctrine in one particular Instance,

Instance, *resembles* (for that is the utmost which can be proved) a Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*. I can in no wise reconcile this to the grand Rule of Charity, "Doing to others as we would they should do to us."

INDEED it is said, "Dr. T. openly defends the Fundamental Doctrine of Popery, Justification by Works." Therefore "he must be a Papist." But here is a double Mistake. For 1. Whatever may be *implied* in some of his Expressions, it is most certain Dr. T. does not *openly defend* Justification by Works. 2. This itself, Justification by Works, is not the *Fundamental Doctrine* of Popery; but the Universality of the *Romish Church* and the Supremacy of the Bishop of *Rome*. And to call any one a *Papist* who denies these, is neither Charity, nor Justice.

I do not agree with the Author in what follows. Dr. T. "loses Sight of the Truth, when he talks of *Christ's* having obtained for us a *Covenant of better Hopes*, and that Faith and Repentance

“ penance are the *Terms* of this Cove-
 “ nant. They are not. They are the
 “ *Free-Gifts* of the Covenant of Grace,
 “ not the *Terms* or *Conditions*. To say
 “ *Privileges* of the Covenant are the
 “ *Terms* or *Conditions* of it, is downright
 “ Popery.”

THIS is downright *calling Names*,
 and no better. But it falls on a greater
 than Dr. T. St. Paul affirms, Jesus
 Christ is the Mediator of a better Covenant,
establish'd upon better Promises. Yea, and
 that better Covenant He “ hath obtained
 “ for us,” by his own Blood. And if
 any desire to receive the Privileges which
 are freely given according to the Tenor
 of this Covenant, *Jesus Christ Himself*
 has mark'd out the Way, *Repent and*
believe the Gospel. These therefore are
 the *Terms* of the Covenant, unless the
 Author of it was mistaken. These are
 the *Conditions* of it: Unless a Man can
 enter into the Kingdom, without either
 repenting or believing. For the Word
Condition means neither more nor less,
 than something *sine quâ non*; without
 which something else is not done. Now
 this is the exact Truth with Regard to
 repenting

repenting and believing; *without which* God does not work in us *Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost.*

IT is true, Repentance and Faith are *Privileges* and *Free-Gifts*. But this does not hinder their being *Conditions* too. And neither Mr. *Calvin* himself, nor any of our Reformers, made any Scruple of calling them so.

“ BUT the Gospel is a *Revelation* of
“ Grace and Mercy, not a *Proposal* of
“ a Covenant of Terms and Condi-
“ ons.” ^d It is both. It is a *Revelation* of
Grace and Mercy, to all that *repent and*
believe. And this the Author himself
owns in the following Page. “ The
“ free Grace of God applies to Sinners
“ the Benefits of *Christ's* Atonement and
“ Righteousness, *by* working in them
“ Repentance and Faith.” ^e Then they
are not applied *without* Repentance and
Faith: That is, in plain Terms, These
are the *Conditions* of that Application.

I READ in the next Page, “ In the
“ Gospel we have the free Promises of
“ Eternal Life, but not annex to Faith
and

“ and Repentance, *as Works of Man.*”
 (True: They are the Gift of God) “ or
 “ the *Terms* or *Conditions* of the Cove-
 “ nant.” Yes certainly. They are no
 less *Terms* or *Conditions* altho’ God
 works them in us.

“ BUT what is promised us as a *Free-*
 “ *Gift*, cannot be received upon the Per-
 “ formance of any *Terms* or *Conditions.*”
 Indeed it can. Our LORD said to the
 Man born blind, *Go and wash in the Pool*
of Siloam. Here was a plain Condition
 to be performed; something *without which*
 he would not have received his Sight.
 And yet his Sight was a *Gift* altogether
 as *free*, as if the Pool had never been
 mentioned.

“ BUT if Repentance and Faith are
 “ the *Free-Gifts* of God, can they be the
 “ *Terms* or *Conditions* of our Justificati-
 “ on?”^f Yes: Why not? They are still
 something *without which* no Man is or
 can be justified.

“ CAN then God give that *freely*,
 “ which He does not give but up-
 “ on, certain *Terms* and *Conditions*?”^g

Doubt-

^f Page 9.

^g Ibid.

Doubtless He can: As one may freely give you a Sum of Money, on *Condition* you stretch out your Hand to receive it. It is therefore no " Contradiction to say, " We are justified *freely by Grace*, and " yet upon certain *Terms or Conditions*." ⁿ

I CANNOT therefore agree, That " we " are accepted *without any Terms* previously perform'd to qualify us for Acceptance." For we are not accepted, nor are we qualified for, or capable of Acceptance, without *Repentance and Faith*.

" BUT a Man is not justified by Works, " but by the Faith of Christ. This excludes all Qualifications." ⁱ Surely it does not exclude the Qualification of *Faith*!

" BUT S. Paul asserts, To him that " worketh not, but believeth on him that " justifieth the Ungodly, his Faith is counted " to him for Righteousness."

TRUE: To him that worketh not: But does GOD justify him that believeth not?

B

Other-

Otherwise, this Text proves just the contrary to what it is brought to prove.

BUT “ our Church excludes Repen-
 “ tance and Faith from *deserving* any
 “ Part of our Justification. Why then
 “ do you insist upon them as *Qualifica-*
 “ *tions requisite* to our Justification!” ^k

BECAUSE *Christ* and his Apostles do so.
 Yet we all agree, they do not *deserve* any
 Part of our Justification. They are no
 Part of the *meritorious Cause*; but they are
 the Conditions of it. This and no other
 is “ the Doctrine of Scripture, and of
 “ the Church of *England!*” Both the
 Scripture and “ our Church allow, yea,
 “ insist on these *Qualifications* or *Condi-*
 “ *tions.*” ^l

“ BUT if Repentance and Faith
 “ would not be valid and acceptable
 “ without the Righteousness of *Christ*,
 “ then they cannot be necessary Qua-
 “ lifications for our Justification.” ^m I
 cannot allow the Consequence. They
 are not acceptable without the Righte-
 ousness or Merits of *Christ*. And yet He
 Him-

^k Page 19.

^l Page 21.

^m Page 22.

Himself has made them necessary Qualifications for our Justification thro' his Merits.

BUT the grand Objection of this Gentleman lies against the Dr's. next Paragraph; the Sum of which is: "The Merits of *Christ* were never intended to supercede the Necessity of Repentance and Obedience" (I would say, Repentance and Faith) "but to make them acceptable in the Sight of God, and to *purchase* for them" (I would add *that obey Him*) "a Reward of immortal Happiness."

I AM not afraid to undertake the Defence of this Paragraph, with this small Variation, against Mr. *Chapman*, Mr. *Nyberg*, Count *Zinzendorf*, or any other Person whatever. Provided only that he will set his Name to his Work: For I do not love fighting in the Dark.

AND I (as well as Dr. *T.*) affirm, That "to say more than this concerning *Christ's* imputed Merits," to say more than, that "they have purchased for us
" Grace

“ Grace to repent and believe, Acceptance upon our believing, Power to obey, and eternal Salvation to them that do obey Him:” To say more than this “ is *blasphemous Antinomianism*,” such as Mr. *Calvin* would have abhorr’d; and does “ open a Door to all Manner of Sin and Wickedness.”

I MUST likewise affirm, That to talk of *imputed Righteousness* in the Manner many do at this Day, is *making the imaginary Transfer of Christ’s Righteousness serve as a Cover for the Unrighteousness of Mankind.*” Does not Mr. *Ch-p--n* do this at *Bristol*? Does not Mr. *M--rd--n*, at *London*? Let them shudder then, let their Blood run cold, who do it: Not theirs, who tell them that they do so. It is not the latter but the former, who “ trample *Christ’s Righteousness* under “ Foot as a mean and vile Thing.”

I FIRMLY believe, “ We are accounted Righteous before God (justified *ONLY for the Merit of Christ.*” But let us have no shifting the Terms: *ONLY through Christ’s imputed Righteousness*

ness, are not the Words of the Article, neither the Language of our Church. Much less does our Church any where affirm, " That the Righteousness of *Christ* is imputed to the ungodly, who " have no Qualifications:"* No Repentance, no Faith. Nor do the Scriptures ever affirm this.

THE Reflection on the General Inference, I so entirely agree with, as to think it worth transcribing. *If you have Faith and Repentance, you want no other Signs or Evidences of your Justification. But if you have not these, to pretend to any other Assurances, Tokens, Feelings or Experiences, is vain and delusive.* Does he know any one who maintains, That a Man may be in a State of Justification. and yet have no Faith or Repentance? But the Marks and Evidences of true Faith which the Scripture has promised, must not be discarded as vain or delusive. The Scripture has promised us the *Assurance of Faith*, to be wrought in us by the Operation of God. It mentions *the Earnest of the Spirit*, and speaks of *Feeling after the LORD* and finding him. And

And so our Church (in her 17 Article) speaks of "Feeling in ourselves the "working of the Spirit of *Christ*:" And (in the Homily for Rogation Week) of "Feeling our Conscience at Peace "with God, thro' Remission of our Sin." So that we must not reject all Assurances, Tokens, Feelings and Experiences, as *vain and delusive*.

NOR do I apprehend Dr. T. ever intended to say, That we must *reject all* inward *Feelings*; but only those which are *without* Faith or Repentance. And who would not reject these? His very Words are, *If you have not these, to pretend to any other Feelings is vain and delusive*. I say so too. Mean Time he is undoubtedly sensible, That there is a *Consolation in Love; a Peace that passeth all Understanding, and a Joy that is unspeakable and full of Glory*. Nor can we imagine him to deny, That these must be *felt*, inwardly felt, wherever they exist.

UPON the whole I cannot but observe, How extremely difficult it is, e-

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ven for Men who have an upright Intention, and are not wanting either in natural or acquir'd Abilities, to understand one another! And how hard it is, to do even Justice to those, whom we do not thoroughly understand! much more to treat them with that Gentleness, Tenderness, and Brotherly Kindness, with which, upon a Change of Circumstances, we might reasonably desire to be treated ourselves! O when shall all Men know whose Disciples we are, by our *loving one another, as he hath loved us!* The God of Love hasten the Time!

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Servant,

JOHN WESLEY.



